

City of Burien

BURIEN PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

January 9, 2007

7:00 p.m.

City Hall Meeting Room

MINUTES

Planning Commission Members Present:

Robert Simpson-Clark, Jim Clingan, Stacie Grage, Jon Newton, Janet Shull, Michael Sumner

Absent:

Rebecca McInteer

Others Present:

Stephanie Jewett, planner; Betsy Geller, AHBL Inc.; Michael Katterman, AHBL, Inc.

Roll Call

Vice-Chair Jon Newton called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. Upon the call of the roll all commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Simpson-Clark, who arrived at 7:06 p.m.; and Commissioner McInteer.

Agenda Confirmation

Motion to approve the agenda as printed was made by Commissioner Grage. Second was by Commissioner Shull and the motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment – None

Approval of Minutes

A. September 5, 2006

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Clingan. Second was by Commissioner Sumner and the motion carried unanimously.

Old Business – None

New Business

A. Discussion of Proposed Amendment to Zoning Code Section 19.15.045 Office Zone to Allow a Height Increase for Hospital Uses

Planner Stephanie Jewett explained that the proposed amendment would allow for an increase in the allowable height in the Office zone for hospital uses provided specific conditions are met.

Betsy Geller, consulting planner with AHBL Inc., said as proposed the amendment applies only to hospital uses in the Office zone. She explained that Highline Medical Center is seeking the code change to accommodate future expansion of the uses on its site. The hospital campus sits on a site of more than five acres; it is the only Office zone in the entire city larger than five acres. The proposed amendment would allow heights up to 95 feet for hospital uses in Office zones, provided they are on sites with a minimum contiguous site area of five acres. To mitigate the potential impacts of the additional height, the amendment contemplates an additional setback of two feet for every one foot of additional height.

Commissioner Newton asked if “building height” refers to the building itself or the mechanical equipment located on the roof. Ms. Jewett the reference is to the building itself.

Dick Salogga with NIC Architecture noted that the hospital campus has a significant grade. The main entrance off of Sylvester Road is at Level 1. The proposed addition to the structure will be Levels 4, 5 and 6, yet the grade level at the top of the site is at Level 5. The acute care portion of the hospital is located near the center of the campus; its expansion is limited by the geography of the site. Vertical expansion is the only option. The Birch wing, constructed in the 1950s, has outlived its useful life; a small piece of it will be torn down to accommodate the new building. Clinical services will be moved out of the old building so it can eventually be torn down; the buildings on the campus that were constructed in the 1980s will not be torn down for the foreseeable future.

Continuing, Mr. Salogga said the proposed amendment will provide the hospital with the options it will need to expand vertically in the future. He pointed out that in the initial project, the mechanical systems will be located on the roof of Level 7; as the building is expanded vertically, Level 7 will become more or less an interstitial floor housing the mechanical systems.

Commissioner Sumner asked how the determination was made to seek a height limit of 95 feet rather than something higher. Mr. Salogga said 95 feet is below the highrise code requirements, which are far more stringent. A height limit of 95 feet will adequately accommodate the planned growth for the hospital. The hospital campus is covered by a master plan that includes a parking garage below the Eighth Avenue Southwest street level. Along Eighth Avenue Southwest there are a number of existing street trees that offer some screening from the street.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Newton, Mr. Salogga said at some time in the future it will be necessary to amend the master plan for the hospital campus in order to allow for additional vertical expansion.

Diane Monroe, facilities manager for Highline Medical Center, said there is no specific plan on the books to expand upward to 95 feet. However, the option is needed to preserve the possibility for the future.

Chair Simpson-Clark disclosed that his mother is the immediate past chair of the board for Highline Medical Center and continues to serve as a board member. He suggested that because the proposed provisions apply only to sites of five acres or more, there should be a requirement to consolidate any individual lots to avoid approving something based on a certain number of lots only to see the lot pattern change to something out of compliance with the original agreement. Vacating the internal lot lines would be a simple housekeeping matter.

Mr. Salogga explained that the land use of the hospital site is regulated by the master plan. The master plan in essence consolidates all of the individual lots into a single entity. Within the hospital campus there are three specific properties on which the Three Tree Medical Office building, the hospital campus and a small wood-frame office building are located. The hospital owns the properties but has given long-term land leases to other developers. The lot lines are necessary to define the property rights specific to each lot.

Mike Katterman, also with AHBL Inc., suggested the definition of “site” in the code should be reviewed to make sure it is defined in a way that would preclude the situation described by Chair Simpson-Clark. He said it is his understanding that the hospital would not be allowed to sell off portions of the hospital campus and thereby avoid the more restrictive setbacks.

Chair Simpson-Clark said he would like to see wording in the amendment to the effect that a major quality hospital is an essential service to the city of Burien, and that that is the reason for giving the special privilege of additional height to the hospital.

Commissioner Shull asked what will preclude other property owners in the future from seeking to apply the provision to their projects in Office zones. Ms. Jewett said staff has considered the issue. There are uses such as treatment facilities that could possibly be defined as a hospital use. However, a GIS review concluded that there are no contiguous Office-zoned lots anywhere in the city that could be combined to meet the five-acre minimum.

Commissioner Newton commented that the slope on the campus site will help to alleviate some of the impacts of additional height.

Mr. Salogga allowed that some of the street trees along Eighth Avenue Southwest may have to be removed to permit construction of the parking garage. However, there is a requirement for the structure to include a lid and be landscaped.

Ms. Jewett said notice of the public hearing will be mailed to all properties within 500 feet of the hospital campus. The public hearing is slated for January 23, following which the commission could make its recommendation to the City Council. There was consensus to discuss the item further on February 13 and to formulate a recommendation to the City Council at that meeting.

Director’s Report – None

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Newton. Second was by Commissioner Shull and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Simpson-Clark adjourned the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

Approved:

/s/ Robert Simpson-Clark, chair
Planning Commission

/s/ Scott Greenberg, director
Community Development Department